

S E R I O U S
CONSIDERATIONS
O N

Absolute Predestination.

Extracted from a late AUTHOR.



B R I S T O L :
Printed by S. and F. Farley, in Castle-Green, 1741.



SERIOUS
CONSIDERATIONS
ON
Absolute PREDESTINATION.

1.  **G**OD out of his Infinite Love, who delighteth not in the Death of a Sinner, but that all should live and be saved, hath given his only Son, to the end that whosoever believeth on him, shou'd not perish, but have everlasting Life: He is the true Light, who enlighteneth every Man that cometh into the World. And this Light wou'd work out the Salvation of All, if not resisted. Nor is it less Universal than Inbred Sin, being the Purchase of his Death who tasted Death for every Man. For as in Adam all died, even so in CHRIST shall all be made alive.

2. But some are not afraid to assert, That GOD by an Eternal and unchangable Decree hath predestinated to Eternal Damnation the far greater Part of Mankind, and that absolutely, without any respect to their Works, but only for the shewing the Glory of his Justice: And that for the bringing this about, he hath appointed these miserable Souls necessarily to walk in their wicked Ways

Ways, that so his Justice may lay hold on them: And that he justly condemns these, altho' he hath withheld from them that Grace by which alone they could have laid hold of Salvation, as having decreed, (without any respect to their Works) That they shall not obey, and that the Gospel which he publicly invites them to accept, shall never prove effectual for their Salvation, but only serve to aggravate their Guilt, and occasion their greater Damnation.

3. We may safely call this Doctrine a Novelty, seeing in the first four hundred Years after Christ, there is no Mention made of it, by any Writer, great or small, in any Part of the Christian Church. For, as it is contrary to the Testimony of Scripture, and to the Tenor of the Gospel, so all the antient Writers, Teachers and Doctors of the Church, pass it over with a profound Silence. The first Foundations of it were laid, in the latter Writings of *Augustine*; who in his Heat against *Pelagius*, let fall some Expressions, which some have unhappily glean'd up, for the establishing of this Error; thereby contradicting many others and many more, and frequent Expressions of the same *Augustine*. It was afterwards taught by *Dominicus*, a *Popish* Frier, and the *Monks* of his Order, and at last it was unhappily taken up by *John Calvin*, (otherwise a Man in divers respects to be commended) to the great staining of his Reputation, and Defamation both of the *Protestant* and of the Christian Religion. However we should not reject it for the Silence of the Antients, if it had any real Bottom in the Word of *GOD*; and if it were not *highly injurious to GOD himself, to JESUS CHRIST our Mediator and Redeemer, to the Power, Virtue, Nobility and Excellency of his Blessed Gospel, and lastly, to All Mankind.*

4. First, *It is highly injurious to GOD, because it makes him the Author of Sin.* I confess the Assertors of this Doctrine deny this Consequence of it: But that is but a meer Illusion, and is equally ridiculous, as if a Man should deny, that *two and two* makes

four. For if G O D has decreed, that the Reprobated shall Perish, and if he hath also decreed that they shou'd walk in those wicked Ways, by which they are led to that End: Who, I pray, is the first Author and Cause thereof but G O D, who so willed and decreed? This is as plain and natural a Consequence, as any can possibly be. And therefore altho' many of the Preachers of this Doctrine have sought out various strange, strain'd and intricate Distinctions to avoid it, yet some, and that of the most eminent among them, have openly acknowledg'd it. I shall instance a few among many Passages. (a) *I say that by the Ordination and Will of G O D, Adam fell. G O D wou'd have Man to fall. Man is blinded by the Will and Commandment of G O D. We refer the Causes of hardening us to G O D. The highest or remote Cause of hardening is, The Will of G O D.* These are Calvin's Words. (b) *G O D (saith Beza) hath predestinated whomsoever he saw meet, not only unto Damnation, but also unto the Causes of it.*

(c) *It is certain (saith Zanchius) that G O D is the first Cause of Obduration. Reprobates are held so fast under G O D's Almighty Decree, that they cannot but Sin and Perish.* (d) *G O D (saith Martyr) doth incline and force the Wills of Wicked Men into great Sins.* (e) *G O D (saith Zuinglius) moveth the Robber to kill. He killeth, G O D forcing him thereunto.* (f) *Reprobate Persons (saith Piscator) are absolutely ordain'd to this twofold End, To undergo everlasting Punishment, and Necessarily to Sin: And, therefore to Sin, that they may be justly punished.*

(a) Calvin in cap. 3. *Gen. Id.* 1. *Inst.* c. 18. S. 1. *Id.* Lib. de. Præd. &c.

(b) Beza Lib. de Præd.

(c) Zanch. de Excæc. q. 5. *Id.* lib. 5. de Nat. Dei.

(d) Martyr in Rom.

(e) Zuing. lib. de Provid. c. 5.

(f) Resp. ad Vorst. part. 1. p. 120.

5. If these Sayings do not import, That GOD is *the Author of Sin*, we must not then seek these Men's Opinions from their Words, but some Way else. It seems as if they had assumed to themselves that monstrous, twofold Will they feign of GOD: One by which they *declare* their Minds openly, and another more *Secret and Hidden*, which is quite contrary to the other. Nor doth it at all help them to say, That Man sins *willingly*; since that *Willingness* to Sin is (according to their Judgment) so necessarily imposed upon him, that he cannot but be Willing, because GOD hath willed and decreed him to be so. This Shift is just as if I should take a Child unable to resist me, and throw it down from a high Precipice. The Weight of its Body indeed makes it go readily down, and the Violence of the Fall beats out its Brains and kills it. But tho' the Weight of its Body and not any immediate Stroke of my Hand makes the Child die; whether is the Child or I the proper Cause of its Death? Let then any Man judge, whether they who make GOD's Part as great, and more immediate, in the Sins of Men, do not make GOD *the Author of Sin*, and so are highly injurious to him?

6. Secondly, This Doctrine is *injurious to GOD*, because it makes him *delight in the Death of Sinners*, contrary to the Express Words of GOD himself. *As I live, saith the Lord GOD, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way and live. Turn ye, turn ye from your evil Ways: For why will ye die, O House of Israel? Ezek. xxxiii. 11. This is good and acceptable in the Sight of GOD our Saviour: Who willeth all Men to be saved, and to come unto the Knowledge of the Truth. 1. Tim. ii. 4. The Lord is long-suffering, not willing that any shou'd Perish, but that all shou'd come unto Repentance.* But if he hath created Men only for this very End, that he might shew forth his Vengeance upon them (as these Men affirm) and for effecting this End, hath withheld from them that Grace, whereby

alone they could be saved from perishing, yea and also predestinated the Evil, that they might fall into it; certainly he must *delight in their Death*, contrary to his own exprefs Declaration.

7. Thirdly, *This Doctrine is highly injurious to CHRIST our Mediator, and to the Efficacy and Excellency of his Gospel.* For it supposes his Mediation to be necessarily of none effect, with regard to the Salvation of the Greater Part of the World: As if he had not by his Sufferings and Death throughly *broken down the middle Wall*, nor yet removed the *Wrath of GOD*, or purchased the Love of GOD for all Mankind: As if it was afore decreed, that it should be of no Service, to the far greater Part of Mankind. And it is to no Purpose to say, That his Death was of Efficacy enough to have saved all Mankind; if in effect its Virtue be not so far extended, as to put all Mankind into a Capacity of Salvation.

8. Fourthly, *It makes the Preaching of the Gospel a meer Mock and Illusion*, if many of those to whom it is preached, are by an irrevocable Decree, shut out from being benefited by it. It wholly makes useless the preaching of Faith and Repentance, and the whole Tenor of the Gospel-Promises and Threatnings. For if such a Decree be already past, Man needs do nothing but wait for *Irresistible Grace*: Which if he be *Elected*, will come, tho' it be but at his last Hour: And if he be *Reprobated*, will never come, be his Diligence and waiting what it can.

9. Fifthly, *This Doctrine makes the coming of CHRIST, and his Sacrifice on the Cross, which the Scripture affirms to have been the Fruit of GOD's Love to the World, to have been rather a Testimony of GOD's Wrath to the World, yea one of the greatest Judgments and Severeſt Acts that can be conceiv'd of GOD's Indignation toward Mankind*: It being only ordain'd (according to this Doctrine) to save a very few, and for the hardening and increasing the Damnation of the far greater Number of Men, namely of all those who

do.

do not truly believe: The Cause of which Unbelief again, (as these Divines, so called, above assert,) is the hidden Counsel of GOD. Certainly then the coming of CHRIST was never to them a Testimony of GOD's Love, but rather of his implacable Wrath: And if the World may be taken for the far greater Number of such as live in it, GOD never loved the World, according to this Doctrine, but rather hated it greatly, in sending his Son to be crucified in it.

10. Sixthly, *This Doctrine is highly injurious to Mankind*; for it renders them in a far worse Condition than the Devils in Hell. For these were some time in a Capacity to have stood: They might have kept their happy Estate but would not: Whereas many Millions of Men are tormented for ever, according to them, who never were happy, nor ever can be. It renders them in a worse State than the Beasts of the Field, of whom the Master requires no more than they are able to perform, and if they be killed, Death is to them the End of all Sorrow: Whereas Man is in Pain without End, for not doing that which he never was able to do. It puts him into a far worse Condition than *Pharaoh* put the *Israelites*: For tho' he withheld Straw from them, yet they could get it by much Labour. But they make GOD to withhold from Men all Means of Salvation, so that they cannot attain it by all their Pains. Yea, they place Mankind in that Condition which the Poets feign of *Tantalus*: Who oppressed with Thirst, stands in Water up to the Chin, yet can by no Means reach it with his Tongue; and being tormented with Hunger, hath Fruits hanging at his very Lips, yet so as he can never lay hold of them with his Teeth. And these Things are so near him, not to nourish him, but to torment him. So do these Teachers make GOD deal with Mankind. They make the outward Creation, the Works of Providence, the Smitings of Conscience, sufficient to convince the Reprobates of Sin, but never intended to help them to Salvation. They make the Preaching of the Gospel,

Gospel; and the offer of Salvation by CHRIST sufficient to condemn them; serving to beget a seeming Faith and a vain Hope; yet by Reason of GOD's Irresistible Decree, all these (say they) are wholly ineffectual to bring them the least Step towards Salvation, and do only contribute to make their Condemnation the greater, and their Torments the more violent and intolerable.

11. In direct Opposition to this we affirm, That GOD out of his infinite Love, who delighteth not in the Death of a Sinner, but that all should live and be saved, hath sent his only begotten Son into the World, that whosoever believeth in him might be saved. This Doctrine is so evident from the Scripture Testimony, that there is scarce found any other Article of the Christian Faith, so frequently, so plainly and so positively asserted. It is that which maketh the preaching of CHRIST to be indeed the Gospel, or *Glad Tidings to All*; as the Angel declared his coming to be, (*Luke, ii. 10.*) *Behold I bring You Good Tidings of Great Joy which shall be to all People.* Whereas if this Coming of CHRIST had not brought a Possibility of Salvation to all, it should rather have been accounted *Bad Tidings of great Sorrow to most People.* Neither would the Angel have had Reason to sing, *Peace on Earth and Good Will towards Men*, if the Greatest Part of Mankind had been necessarily shut out from receiving any Benefit from it. And indeed if so, how should CHRIST have sent out his Servants to *preach the Gospel to every Creature*? that is, To every Son and Daughter of Mankind; for here is no Exception. He commands them to *preach Salvation to All, Repentance and Remission of Sins to All, warning every one and exhorting every one* as Paul did, *Col. i. 28.* But how cou'd they have preached the Gospel to every Man, as became the Ministers of CHRIST, in much Assurance, if Salvation by that Gospel had not been possible to All? What if some of those had asked them, *Hath CHRIST died for Me*? Should they have answered conditionally,

conditionally, *If Thou repent, CHRIST died for Thee?* The same Question would have recurr'd, *Hath CHRIS T died for Me that I may repent? Otherwise My Repentance is impossible.* To this nothing could be answer'd but the same thing over again. Whereas those who bring the Glad Tidings of the Gospel of Peace, are to preach the Common Salvation, Repentance unto All, offering a Door of Mercy and Hope to All, thro' JESUS CHRIST, *who gave himself a Ransom for All.* The Gospel invites All. And certainly CHRIST intended not to deceive and delude the Greater Part of Mankind, when he invites and cries, saying, *Come unto me all Ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give You Rest.* If All then ought to seek after him, and to look for Salvation by him, he must needs have made *Salvation possible to All.* For who is bound to seek after that which is impossible? Certainly it were a Mocking of Men to bid them to do so. And such as deny, that by the Death of CHRIST *Salvation is made possible to All Men,* do most blasphemously make GOD mock the World, in giving his Servants a Commission to *preach the Gospel of Salvation unto All,* while he hath before decreed, that it shall not be possible for them to receive it. Do not they make the LORD to send forth his Servants *with a Lie in their Mouth,* commanding them, to bid All and every one believe, that CHRIST died for Them, and had purchas'd Salvation for them: Whereas (according to this Doctrine) he hath done no such thing, or ever intended it? Seeing then CHRIST hath commanded to preach *Repentance and Remission of Sins to All,* it is certain that *he died for All:* And that it is possible for all to repent and believe. In as much as he who commission'd his Servants thus to preach, is a GOD of Truth and no Mocker of poor Mankind, neither doth he require of any Man, that which it is simply impossible for him to do.

12. Moreover, if we regard the Testimony of the Scripture, there is not, that I know of, one Scripture which

which affirms, *CHRIST did not die for All*, whereas there are divers Scriptures which positively and expressly affirm, *He did*. As 1. Tim. ii. 1, 3, 4, 6. *I exhort therefore that first of all Supplications, Prayers, Intercessions and giving of Thanks be made for all Men, &c.* For this is good and acceptable in the Sight of *GOD* our Saviour, who will have all Men to be saved, and to come to the Knowledge of the Truth—*Who gave himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in due time.* Except we make the Apostle to assert quite another thing than he meant, there can be nothing more plain than this. For first he here directs them *To pray for all Men*; and to prevent such an Objection as this, *CHRIST prayed not for the World, neither willeth he us to pray for all*: Because he willeth not that all should be saved, but hath ordain'd many to be damned, he adds, *This is good and acceptable with GOD who willeth all Men to be saved.* I desire to know what can be more expressly affirmed? Or, can any Two Propositions be stated in Terms more contradictory, than these Two,

*GOD willeth not some Men to be saved, and
GOD willeth all Men to be saved?*

If we believe the last, as the Apostle hath affirmed, the first cannot be true. Whence (to conclude) he gives us a Reason of *CHRIST's* Willingness that all Men should be saved, in these Words, *Who gave himself a Ransom for all.* As if he had said, since he gave himself a Ransom for All, it is plain he willeth all Men to be saved.

13. The same thing is positively affirmed, *Heb. ii. 9.* *We see JESUS who was made a little lower than the Angels, for the suffering of Death, crown'd with Glory and Honour, that he by the Grace of GOD might taste Death for every Man.* He that will but open his Eyes, may see this Truth here asserted. If he tasted Death for every Man, then certainly there is no Man for whom he did not taste Death; and then there

is

is no Man who may not be made a Sharer of the Benefit of it.

14. Again, Our LORD himself says, *He came not to condemn the World, but that the World thro' him might be saved.* John iii. 17. And John xii. 47. *He came not to judge the World, but to save the World:* Whereas, according to that Doctrine, he *did* come rather to condemn the World, and not that it might be saved by him. For if he did not come to bring Salvation to the greater Part of Mankind, but to increase their Condemnation, it necessarily follows, That he did not come with an Intention to save, but to judge and condemn the greater Part of the World, contrary to his exprefs Testimony.

15. Yet again, as the Apostle Paul asserts, That GOD *willeth the Salvation of all*, so doth the Apostle Peter assert, That he *willeth not the perishing of any*, 2. Pet. iii. 9. *The LORD is not slack concerning his Promise, as some Men count Slackness: But is long-suffering to-us ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all shou'd come to Repentance.* And this is agreeable to that of the Prophet Ezekiel, xxxiii. 11. *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no Pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his Way and live.* Now if it be safe to believe GOD, we must not think, that he intends to cheat us by all these Expressions, but that he is in good Earnest. And if his Will take not Effect, the blame is on our Parts; which could not be if CHRIST had never died for us but left us under an Impossibility of Salvation. What mean all those earnest Invitations, all those regretting Expostulations the Scripture is full of? As, *Why will Ye die, O House of Israel? They will not come unto me that they might have Life. I have waited to be gracious unto You. How often would I have gather'd You, and Ye would not?* Are Men who are so invited under no Capacity of being saved? Is Salvation impossible to them. Will you then suppose GOD in this, to be only like the Author of a Romance, or Master of
a Comedy

a *Comedy*, who amuses and raises the various Affections and Passions of the Spectators : Sometimes leading them into Hope, and sometimes into Despair ; All this being, in effect, but a mere Illusion, while he hath appointed what the Conclusion of all shall be ?

16. Farther yet ; This Doctrine is abundantly confirmed by that of the Apostle, 1 *John* ii. 1, 2. *If any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, JESUS CHRIST the Righteous : And he is the Propitiation for our Sins ; and not for ours only, but also for the Sins of the Whole World.* The Way which our Adversaries take to evade this Testimony, is most foolish and ridiculous. *The World here, say they, is the World of Believers :* For which we have nothing but their own Assertion. For first, let them shew me, if they can, in all the Scripture, where *the whole World* is taken for Believers only. I shall shew them, where it is many times taken for the quite contrary, as, *The World knoweth me not : The World receiveth me not : I am not of this World.* Besides all these Scriptures, *Psal* xvii. 14. *Isai.* xiii. 11. *Matth.* xviii. 7. *John* vii. 7. and viii. 26. and xii. 19. and xiv. 17. and xv. 18, 19. and xvii. 14. and xviii. 20. 1 *Cor.* i. 21. and ii. 12. and vi. 2. *Gal.* vi. 14. *James* i. 27. 2 *Peter* ii. 20. 1 *John* ii. 15. and iii. 1. and iv. 4, 5. and many more. Secondly, The Apostle in this very Place contradistinguishes the *World* from the *Saints* thus, *And not for Ours only, but for the Sins of the whole World.* What means the Apostle by *Ours* here ? Is not that the Sins of Believers ? Was not he one of those Believers ? And was not this an Universal Epistle, written to all the Saints that then were ? So that according to these Men's Comment, there wou'd be a very unnecessary and foolish Redundancy in the Apostle's Words, as if he had said, *He is a Propitiation not only for the Sins of all Believers, but also for the Sins of all Believers.* Is not this to make the Apostle's Words Nonsense ? Let them shew us, where ever there is such a Manner of Speaking in all the Scripture ; where

where any of the Penmen first name the *Believers* together with themselves, and then contradistinguishes them from some other *whole World of Believers*?

17. But we need no better Interpreter for the Apostle than himself, who uses the very same Expression in the same Epistle, c. v. 19. Saying, *We know that we are of G O D and the whole World lieth in Wickedness.* There cannot be found in all the Scripture, Two Places which better answer one another: Seeing in both the same Apostle in the same Epistle, to the same Persons, contradistinguishes *himself and the Saints to whom he writes from the whole World*; which yet according to these Men's Comments ought to be understood of *Believers*; as if St. John had said, *We know Particular Believers are of GOD, but the whole World of Believers lieth in Wickedness.* What absurd wresting of Scripture were this? And yet it may be as well pleaded for as the other. Seeing then the Apostle tells us plainly, That CHRIST died not only for the Church of G O D to whom he wrote, but also *for the whole World*, let us hold fast this Truth, which we have receiv'd not of Men but of G O D.

18. But in order to make it yet more plain, we shall shew these two Things.

First, *That G O D hath given to every Man born into the World, a Time or Day of Visitation, during which they may be saved.*

Secondly, *That for this End, he hath given to every Man, a Measure of Light and Grace, which if it is not resisted will work the Salvation of All; but if it is, will become their Condemnation.*

19. Now according to this Doctrine, *the Mercy of G O D is excellently well set forth*, in that none are necessarily shut out from Salvation; and his *Justice*, in that he condemns none but such as might have been saved and wou'd not.

This Doctrine agrees with the *whole Tenor of the Gospel*, wherein Repentance and Remission of Sins are commanded to be preach'd to every Creature.

It magnifies the Merits and Death of CHRIST, in
 B that

that it not only accounts them sufficient to save All, but declares them to be brought so nigh to All, that they are thereby put into a Capacity of Salvation.

It exalts above all the Grace of G O D, to which it attributes All Good, ascribing thereto not only the first Motions of Good, but also the whole Conversion and Salvation of the Soul.

As it makes the whole Salvation of Man to depend upon G O D, so it makes his Condemnation to be wholly of himself, in that he resisted the Grace of G O D, and when he might have been saved, wou'd not.

It takes away all Ground of Despair, in that it gives every Man cause to hope for Salvation, nor yet doth it feed any one in Security, in that none know how soon their Day may expire: And therefore, it is a compleat Incitement and lively Encouragement to every Man, to forsake Evil and close with that which is Good.

Lastly, It is really and in effect, tho' not in so many Words, confirm'd and establish'd by all the Preachers of the Christian Religion, that ever were, or now are, even by those who otherwise oppose this Doctrine: In that they all, whatsoever Place they come to, do preach to the People and to every Individual among them, that they may be saved, intreating them to believe in CHRIST, who hath died for them. So that what they deny in the general, they acknowledge of every Particular; there being no Man to whom they do not preach, in order to Salvation, telling him JESUS CHRIST calls and wills him to believe and be saved: And that if he refuse he shall therefore be condemn'd, and his Condemnation is of himself. Such is the Power of Truth, that it constrains its Adversaries, even against their Wills to plead for it.

20. We do not indeed by *this Day of Visitation*, understand the whole time of a Man's Life; tho' in some it may be extended to the very Hour of Death: But *such a Season*, at least, *as sufficiently clears G O D of every Man's Condemnation*, which to some may be sooner, and to others later, according as the LORD in his Wisdom sees meet. So that many Men may, out-

livethis Day, after which G O D *suffers* them to be *hardned*, as a just Punishment of their wilful Unbelief, and even *raises them up* as Instruments of Wrath, and makes them a Scourge one against another. To Men in this Condition may be fitly applied those Scriptures, which are abused to prove, That G O D constrains Men to sin. This is plainly exprels'd by the Apostle, *Rom. i. from v. 17. to the end: But especially v. 28. Even as they did not like to retain G O D in their Knowledge, G O D gave them up to a Reprobate Mind, to do those Things which are not convenient.* And that many outlive the Day of their Visitation, appears by CHRIST's weeping over *Jerusalem, Luke xix. 42. saying, If Thou hadst known in this thy Day the Things that belong unto thy Peace! But now they are hid from thy Eyes:* This plainly imports a time when they might have known them, which now was removed from them.

21. But tho' we affirm there is a time given to all, wherein they *may* be saved, yet we deny not such Grace may be given to Some, that they *must* be saved. There may be some in whom the Grace of G O D so worketh, that they *cannot resist it.* But there are none in whom it doth not work so that they might be saved, if they did not wilfully reject Salvation.

22. By these Positions, two Great Objections are easily solved. The first is brought from those Places of Scripture, wherein G O D seems to have predestinated some to Salvation. We grant he has: So here is no Difficulty at all. The Second is drawn from those Places, wherein G O D seems to have predestinated some to Destruction; because he is said, *To harden their Hearts;* and to have *raised them up, that they might cause his Power to be known.* But if they be number'd among those Men, whose Day of Visitation is over, this Objection also is at an end.

23. We come now more directly to shew, *That G O D hath given to every Man a Day or Time of Visitation, wherein it is possible for him to be saved.* Now if we prove that, there is a Time or Day

given, in which those might have been saved, who actually perish, the Matter is done. (For none deny that those who are saved have a Day of Visitation) And this appears by the Complaints the Spirit of GOD, thro'out the whole Scripture, makes, even to those that did Perish, challenging them for not accepting GOD's Visitation and offer'd Mercy. Thus the LORD expresses himself first of all to *Cain*, Gen. iv. 6, 7. *And the LORD said unto Cain, why art thou wroth, and why is thy Countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt Thou not be accepted? If thou doest not well, Sin lieth at the Door.* This was said to *Cain*, before he slew his Brother. We see how GOD gave him Warning; and offer'd, in the Day of his Visitation, Acceptance if he did well. For those Words, *Shalt thou not be accepted? Must import, Thou shalt be accepted, if thou doest well.* So that if we may trust GOD, the Fountain of all Truth, there was a Day in which it was possible, even for *Cain* to be accepted. The LORD himself also shews, That he gave a Day of Visitation to the *Old World*, Gen. vi. 3. *And the LORD said, my Spirit shall not always strive with Man:* Manifestly implying, That his Spirit did strive with him for a Season, which Season expiring, GOD ceas'd to strive with him in order to his Salvation. From this Day of Visitation which GOD hath given to many, it is, that he is said to *wait to be gracious*, *Isai*, xxx, 18. And to be *long-suffering*, *Exod.* xxxiv. 6. *Numb.* xiv. 18. *Psal.* lxxxvi. 15. and *Jer.* xv. 15. where the Prophet in his Prayer lays hold on the *Long-suffering of GOD*; and in his Expostulating with GOD, he shuts out the Objection of our Adversaries in the 18th Verse, *Why is my Pain perpetual and my Wound incurable, which refuseth to be healed? Wilt Thou altogether be unto me as a Liar and as Waters that fail?* Whereas, according to our Adversaries Opinion, the *Pain* of the most Part of Men is *perpetual*, and their *Wound altogether incurable*. Yea the Offer of Salvation unto them is *as a Lie and as Waters that fail*, being never intended to be of any Effect unto them. The Apostle *Peter* says expressly, That this *Long-suffering of*

G O D waited in the Days of Noah, for those of the Old World; answerably to Gen. vi. 3. And that none may object that this Long-suffering or striving of the LORD was not in order to their Salvation, the same Apostle saith as expressly (2. Pet. iii, 15.) That the Long-suffering of G O D is to be accounted Salvation: And with this Long-suffering, a little before he couples, That he is not willing that any should perish. Where, taking him for his own Interpreter, as is most fit, he teaches, that those to whom the LORD is long-suffering (which he declareth he was to the Old World, and is now to All, not willing that any should perish) they are to account this Long-suffering of G O D to them Salvation. But how can they account it Salvation, if there be not so much as a Possibility of Salvation conveyed to them therein?

24. St. Peter, further refers to the Writings of Paul, shewing this to have been the Universal Doctrine. Where it is observable he adds, In which are some Things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest to their own Destruction: Intimating plainly those Expressions in Paul's Epistles, as Rom. ix. &c. which some unlearned in Spiritual Things, wrested so as to contradict G O D's Long-suffering towards All, not willing that any of them should perish, but that all should come to the saving Knowledge of his Truth. Would to G O D many had taken more Heed than they have to this Advertisment!

25. That Place of the Apostle Paul which Peter seems here more particularly to hint at, doth much contribute also to clear the Matter, Rom. ii. 4. Despisest thou the Riches of his Goodness and Forbearance and Long-suffering, not knowing that the Goodness of G O D leadeth thee to Repentance? St. Paul speaks here to the unregenerate and wicked, who (in the following Verse he saith) treasure up Wrath unto the Day of Wrath. And to such he commends the Riches of the Forbearance and Long-suffering of G O D, shewing that its tending is, To lead them to Repentance. But how cou'd it have this Tendency, To lead them

to Repentance? Or how cou'd it be called *Riches of Goodness* to them, if there was not a Time wherein they might repent by it, and come to be Sharers of the *Riches* thereof?

26. The Sum is this: If GOD plead with the Wicked, from the Possibility of their being accepted; if GOD's Spirit strive with them for a Season, in order to save them who afterwards perish; if he wait to be gracious unto them; if he be Long-suffering towards them; if during the Time of this Long-suffering GOD willeth them not to perish, but by the Riches of his Goodness and Forbearance leadeth them to Repentance; Then there was a Day of Visitation, even to those who have perish'd, wherein they might have been sav'd.

27. Secondly, This appears from *Isaiah*, v. 4. *What could I have done more to my Vineyard? For in Verse 2, he saith, He had fenced it and gather'd out the Stones thereof and planted it with the choicest Kine. And yet (saith he) when I looked it should have brought forth Grapes, it brought forth Wild Grapes. Wherefore he calleth the Men of Judah to judge between him and his Vineyard, saying, What cou'd I have done more to my Vineyard than I have done in it? And yet (as is said) it brought forth Wild Grapes: Which was applied to those in Israel, who refused GOD's Mercy. The same Similitude is used by CHRIST, Matt. xxi. 33. Mark xii. 1. and Luke xx. 9. where JESUS shews, how to some a Vineyard was planted, and all Things given necessary for them, to get them Fruit to render their Master, and how the Master many Times waited to be merciful to them, in sending Servants after Servants, and passing by many Offences, before he determined to destroy and cast them out. Now this cannot be understood of the Saints, or of such as repent and are saved: For its said expressly, *He will destroy them*. Neither would the Parable any way answer the End for which it is brought, if these Men had not been in a Capacity to have done good. Yea such was their Capacity that CHRIST saith in the Prophet, what cou'd I have done more? So that it is manifest, by this Parable, repeated by Three*

Evangelists, CHRIST declares his Long-suffering towards those Men, who, when Means of Salvation were afforded to them, did nevertheless resist and wou'd not be saved.

28. Lastly, That there is a Day of Visitation given even to the Wicked, wherein they may be saved, and which being expired they are then shut out from Salvation, appears evidently by CHRIST's Lamentation over *Jerusalem*, exprest in three sundry Places, *Matt. xxiii. 37, Luke xiii. 34, and 19, 41, 42. And when he was come near, he beheld the City and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy Day the Things that belong to thy Peace! But now they are hid from thine Eyes:* Than which nothing can be more plain. For first, he here shews, That there was a Day, wherein the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem* might have known those Things that belonged to their Peace: Secondly, That during that Day, he was willing to have gather'd them, even as a Hen gathereth her Young: Thirdly, That because they refused the Things belonging to their Peace, they were at length hid from their Eyes. Why were they hid? Because ye wou'd not suffer me to gather You; ye wou'd not see those Things that were good for you, in the Season of GOD's Love towards you: And therefore now, that Day being expired, ye cannot see them. And for a farther Judgment, GOD suffers you to be harden'd in Unbelief.

29. So it is after they have rejected the Offer of Mercy, and Salvation, and not before, that GOD hardens Mens Hearts. And thus *To him that hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, shall be taken away, even that which he hath: He hath not; because he hath lost the Season of using it, and so to him it is now as nothing.* For CHRIST uses this Expression, *Matt. xxv. 26.* on occasion of the taking the one Talent from the slothful Servant: Which Talent was no way insufficient of itself, but of the same Nature with those given to the others. And therefore the LORD had Reason to exact the Profit of it proportionably, as of the rest. So (I say) it is after rejecting the Day of Visitation, that the Judgment of Obdu-

ration is inflicted on Men: As CHRIST pronounces it on the *Jews*, out of *Isaiah* vi. 9. which all the Four Evangelists mention. *Matt.* xiii. 14. *Mark* iv. 12. *Luke* viii. 10. *John* xii. 40. And last of all, St. Paul, after he had offered Salvation to the *Jews* at Rome, pronounces the same, *Acts* xxviii. 26. *Well spake the Holy Ghost by Isaiah the Prophet unto our Fathers, saying, Go unto this People and say, Hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand, and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive. For the Heart of this People is waxed gross and their Ears are dull of hearing, and their Eyes have they closed; least they should see with their Eyes, and hear with their Ears, and understand with their Hearts, and should be converted and I should heal them.* So it appears, that GOD wou'd have had them to see, but *they closed their Eyes*; and therefore they were justly harden'd.

30. What now remains to be proved is, That GOD hath given to every Man during the Day of his Visitation, a Measure of saving sufficient Light and Grace. And this I shall prove, thro' GOD's Assistance, by plain and clear Testimonies of Scripture.

31. First, from that of St. *John* i. 9. *That was the True Light which lighteth every Man that cometh into the World.* He had said before, *The Life that is in him is the Light of Men*, and, *the Light shineth in the Darknes*: And to this he adds, *He is the true Light that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World.*

32. From whence we may in short observe, That the Apostle calls CHRIST *the Light of Men*. And as he is the Light, if we walk with him in that Light which he communicates to us, we come to have Fellowship and Communion with him, as the same Apostle saith elsewhere, *1 John* i. 7. Secondly, That *this Light shineth in the Darknes, tho' the Darknes comprehend it not.* Thirdly, That *this true Light lighteth every Man who cometh into the World.* Here the Apostle carefully avoids their Captiousness, who wou'd restrain this to a certain Number; for, where every one is, there is none excluded. And shou'd they

say, that this *every Man* is only *every one of the Elect*, the following Words *every Man that cometh into the World* wou'd plainly refute them. So that it is clear, there comes no Man into the World, whom CHRIST hath not *enlightened* in some Measure, and in whose dark Heart the Light hath not shined. *Tho' the Dark-ness comprehend it not*, yet it *shineth* there, and the Nature thereof, is to dispell the Dark-ness, where Men shut not their Eyes upon it.

33. And for what End this Light is given, is exprest in Verse 7. where *John* is said to come for a *Witness to bear Witness to the Light, that all Men thro' it* (*ὅτι αὐτοῦ*) *might believe*. Our Translators indeed (to make it suit their own Doctrine) have turned the Words *thro' Him*, as if all Men were to believe *thro' John*. For which as there is nothing in the Text, so it is contrary to the whole Strain of the Context. For seeing CHRIST hath lighted every Man with this Light, is it not, that they may come to believe *thro' it*? *John* shined not in the Dark-ness, but this Light *shineth in the Dark-ness*, that having dispell'd the Dark-ness, it may beget Faith.

34. Seeing then this Light is the Light of JESUS CHRIST, and the Light thro' which Men come to believe it needs not to be doubted, but that it is a supernatural, saving and sufficient Light. It cannot be any of the natural Faculties of our Soul, because it is said to shine in the Dark-ness, which Dark-ness is no other than the natural State of Man. And that it is sufficient and saving, I prove thus:

That which is given that all Men thro' it may believe; that by walking in which we have Fellowship with GOD, must be sufficient to Salvation; but such is *this Light*. Therefore, it is sufficient for Salvation.

Again, That which we are commanded to *believe in*, that *we may become the Children of the Light*, must be a supernatural, sufficient and saving Principle: But we are commanded so to *believe in this Light*. Therefore, It is a supernatural, sufficient, and saving Principle.

The first Proposition cannot be denied; the second is CHRIST'S own Words, *John xii. 36. While ye have*

the Light, believe in the Light, that ye may be the Children of the Light.

35. If it be said, That by *Light* here is meant CHRIST's outward Person, this is sufficiently answered by the Words themselves, and by the Verse going before, *Walk, while ye have the Light, lest Darknes come upon you*; plainly importing, That when that Light in which they were to believe was removed, they shou'd lose the Capacity or Season of believing. Now this cou'd not be understood of CHRIST's Person; for many did savingly believe in HIM (as we do at this Day) when His outward Person was far removed from them. So that this Light in which they were commanded to believe must be that inward Light from CHRIST, which shines in every Man's Heart for a Season, even during the Day of his Visitation: While this continueth to call, invite and exhort, Men are said to have it, and may believe in it. But when they have rejected it, it is at length withdrawn, and then they know not where to go. And therefore to such rebellious ones, the Day of the Lord is said to be *Darkness* and not *Light*, *Amos v. 18.*

36. That a Measure of this saving Light or Grace is given to All, CHRIST telleth us expressly in the Parable of the Sower, *Matt. xiii. Mark iv. and Luke viii.* where He saith, That this Seed sown in those several Sorts of Ground, is *The Word of the Kingdom, even that Word which, as St. James saith, is able to save the Soul.* Now we may observe, That the Seed which was sown by the *Way-side*, and in the *Stony* and *Thorny-Ground*, altho' it did not profit there, was the same Seed which was sown in the *good Ground*. But the Cares of the World, or the Deceitfulness of Riches, or the Desire of other Things, or the Fear of Persecution, hinders this Seed from growing in the Hearts of many. Not but that, in its own Nature, it is sufficient to Salvation; being the very same with that, which groweth up and prospereth in the Hearts of those who receive it. So that, tho' all are not saved by it, yet there is a Seed of Salvation sown in

the Hearts of All, which wou'd grow up and save the Soul, if it were not choaked and hindered.

37. To this answers the Parable of the *Talents*, *Matt. xxv.* He that had two *Talents* was accepted as well as he that had *five*, because he used them to his Master's Profit. And he that had *one* might have done the same. His *Talent* was of the same Nature with the Rest. It was as capable to have brought forth an Increase in Proportion as any of theirs. And so, tho' there be not a like Proportion of Grace given to all, but to some *five Talents*, to some *two*, and to some *one Talent* only, yet there is given to All that which is sufficient, and no more is required than according to that which is given: For *unto whomsoever much is given, of him also much shall be requir'd.* *Luke xii. 48.* He that had the two *Talents* was accepted in giving *four*, nothing less than he that gave the *ten*. So shou'd he also that gave the *one*, if he had given *two*. And no Doubt *one* was as capable of producing *two*, as *five* of producing *ten*, or *two* *four*.

38. I shall add but one Proof more, *That all Men have a Measure of saving Grace*, which is that of the Apostle Paul to Titus, c. ii. 11. *The Grace of GOD that bringeth Salvation hath appeared unto all Men:* Than which there can be nothing more clear, it comprehending both Parts of the Controversy. First, it testifies, that it is no natural Principle, but the *Grace of GOD bringing Salvation*. Secondly, It says, that this hath appeared, not to *a Few*, but to *all Men*. And there is nothing (as the following Words declare) required of Man, which this Grace teacheth not. Yet I have heard a Publick Preacher, to evade the Strength of this Text, deny this Grace to be saving and say, *It meant only common Graces, such as is the Heat of the Fire and the Light of the Sun.* Such is the Darkeness of those that oppose the Truth! Whereas the Text saith expressly, it is saving (*Σωτήριος*). Others that cannot deny but it is saving, say, This *all* Means not every individual, but only some of all Kinds. But is a bare Denial sufficient to overturn a positive Assertion? If the Scriptures may be so abused, what so absurd as

may not be pleaded for from them? Or what so manifest as may not be denied? We have then no Reason to be stagger'd at their denying what the Scripture expressly affirms. They may as well persuade us, that we do not intend that which we affirm, as make us believe the Apostle speaks a Thing in plain Words, and yet intends quite the Contrary.

39. And indeed can there be any Thing more absurd, than to say, where the Word is plainly ALL it does not mean ALL, but only FEW? It is true that ALL is sometimes taken for the *greater Number*, of two Numbers mention'd; but let them shew us if they can, either in Scripture, or Profane or Ecclesiastical Writings, that any Man who wrote Sense, did ever use the Word ALL, to express of two Members, the Lesser. Whereas they affirm, that the far Lesser Number have receiv'd saving Grace, and yet will have the Apostle to signify them only by the Word ALL: Contrary to all the Rules of speaking, as well as to the whole Tenor of the Gospel.

40. We conclude then, That *the Gospel is indeed Good Tidings of Great Joy which may be unto all People: That the Ministers thereof, are to preach to every Creature, to declare to all the common Salvation, and to offer Repentance and Remission of Sins to all, warning every one and exhorting every one: That CHRIST died for All who died in Adam, that he gave himself a Ransom for All; tasting Death for every Man: That he came not to condemn the World, but that the World thro' him might be saved: That he willeth that all Men should be saved, and willeth not that any should perish: That he is the Propitiation not for our Sins only, who believe, but also for the Sins of the whole World. That accordingly he giveth to all a Day or Time of Visitation, wherein it is possible for them to be saved; and therein a Measure of saving Grace, so that if they die, their Blood is on their own Heads: Seeing, when they might they wou'd not come unto Him, that they might have Life.*

1005